

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7226

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LOME 0202

ABIDJAN ALSO FOR DATT

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, TO

SUBJ: TOGOLESE GOVERNMENT CHANGES

REF: LOME 0163

SUMMARY: REMOVAL OF LT COL CHANGO FROM GOVERNMENT
LEAVES EYADEMA AND ALIDOU AS ONLY REMAINING MILITARY
MEMBERS OF GOVERNMENT. ALTHOUGH TOGO PRESSE CLAIMED
CHANGE "TECHNICAL", EVERYONE BELIEVES IT HIGHLY
POLITICAL AND PROBABLY RELATED TO INTERNAL RIVALRIES
IN PRESIDENT'S CABRAI TRIBE. ONE THOROUGHLY DEPENDABLE
TOGOLESE SOURCE HAS REPORTED THAT ABOUT TWO MONTHS AGO
KOUMEAN CABRAIS FIRED ON HELICOPTER IN WHICH PRESIDENT
WAS FLYING. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE HEARD NO OTHER ACCOUNT
OF THIS INCIDENT, NOT EVEN A WHISPER, SOURCE'S
CREDIBILITY IS SUCH THAT WE HAVE TO ACCEPT IT AT FACE
VALUE. END SUMMARY

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1. COMMENTING ON GOVERNMENT CHANGES (REFTEL), POLYCARPE JOHNSON INSISTED IN TOGO-PRESSE 22 JANUARY THAT REMOVAL OF LT COL CHANGO FROM HIS POST OF MINISTER OF JUSTICE HAD ABSOLUTELY NO POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE. ACCORDING TO JOHNSON, CHANGE WAS "TECHNICAL" ONE AND HAD AS SOLE PURPOSE PERMITTING CHANGO, AS SECOND RANKING GENDARMERIE OFFICER, TO DEVOTE HIMSELF ENTIRELY TO GENDARMERIE, WHILE TOP-RANKING GENDARMERIE OFFICER, MINISTER OF HEALTH LT COL ALIDOU, CONTINUED TO DIVIDE HIS TIME BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND GENDARMERIE.

2. ALTHOU THIS COULD BE TRUE, NO ONE WILL BELIEVE IT. CERTAINLY NO ONE I HAVE TALKED TO DOES. CHANGO, A POORLY EDUCATED FORMER FRENCH ARMY ENLISTED MAN, HAS NO QUALIFICATION WHATSOEVER TO BE MINISTER OF JUSTICE. HIS APPOINTMENT TO THAT POST IN 1969 CAN HAVE HAD ONLY A POLITICAL MOTIVATION. THIS BEING SO, HIS REMOVAL ALSO IS BEING TAKEN AS POLITICAL. THAT IS, EITHER THERE IS A POLITICAL REASON FOR HIS REMOVAL OR THE ORIGINAL POLITICAL REASON FOR HIS APPOINTMENT HAS LOST ITS VALIDITY. FROM WHAT I KNOW THUS FAR, BOTH PARTS OF THIS HYPOTHESIS MAY BE TRUE.

3. ON ASTUTE POLITICAL OBSERVER (A FORMER BIG NAME IN TOGOLESE POLITICS) TOLD ME SOME TIME AGO THAT EYADEMA HAD APPOINTED CHANGO MINISTER, AND MAINTAINED HIM IN THAT POSITION, PRECISELY BECAUSE HE CONSIDERED HIM A DANGEROUS RIVAL AND WISHED TO NEUTRALIZE HIM. THIS OBSERVER CLAIMED THAT EYADEMA HAD REASON TO BELIEVE AT THAT TIME (1969) THAT CHANGO HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN THE PLOTTING OF A COUP D'ETAT AGAINST HIM BY SOLDIERS FROM KOUMEA, A RIVAL CABRAI VILLAGE OF EYADEMA'S PIYA. (SEE ALSO LOME 0131, 29 JANUARY 1972) EYADEMA THUS ELEVATED HIM TO MINISTERIAL RANK, PARTIALLY SATISFYING HIS AMBITIONS, AND PUTTING HIM WHERE HE COULD KEEP A CAREFUL EYE ON HIM.

4. ANOTHER WELL-CONNECTED TOGOLESE HAS NOW CONFIRMED TO ME FOREGOING, IN ITS GENERAL LINES. ACCORDING TO THIS SOURCE, SOLDIERS INVOLVED IN PLOT WERE SUPPORTERS OF EX-MAJOR EM-MANUEL BODJOLLE, ALSO OF KOUMEA, WHO WAS FORCED OUT OF TOGOLESE POLITICAL LIFE BY GRUNITSKY AT EYADEMA'S INSTIGATION. SOURCE BELIEVES, HOWEVER, THAT CHANGO WAS BEHIND COUP PLANNING.

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5. SAME SOURCE REPORTED THAT PRESIDENT'S HELICOPTER WAS FIRED ON BY KOUMEANS ABOUT TWO MONTHS AGO. (HE LOVES TO FLY AROUND LAMA KARA REGION, LANDING IN VARIOUS CABRAI VILLAGES TO SHOW HIMSELF OFF TO HIS PEOPLE.) PERSONS INVOLVED WERE ARRESTED AND HAVE BEEN HELD IN LAMA KARA. SOURCE, WHOSE OWN SOURCE FOR FOREGOING IS MEMBER OF EYADEMA'S FAMILY, HAD NOT HEARD CHANGO'S NAME MENTIONED

IN CONNECTION WITH THIS INCIDENT BUT NOW SPECULATED THAT HIS REMOVAL MIGHT BE RELATED TO IT. HE EXPECTS NEXT STEP TO BE REMOVAL OF CHANGO FROM DIRECT MILITARY COMMAND. AN INTERESTING PROLOGUE TO CHANGO'S DISMISSAL FROM GOVERNMENT IS FACT THAT ON JANUARY 8, THIRTEEN DAYS BEFORE REMOVING HIM, EYADEMA PROMOTED HIM TO LT COLONEL, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1.

6. CHANGO'S REMOVAL THUS APPEARS AS FIRST POLITICALLY REALLY SIGNIFICANT CHANGE EYADEMA HAS MADE IN HIS GOVERNMENT IN OVER THREE YEARS I HAVE BEEN HERE. IN JANUARY 1972 HE DROPPED LT COL ASSILA AS MINISTER OF INTERIOR BUT ONLY AFTER ASSILA HAD BEEN ABSENT IN PARIS FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS AND WAS LIVING, AS HE STILL IS, WITH INDISPENSABLE ASSISTANCE OF A KIDNEY MACHINE. ASSILA, STILL SENIOR SOUTHERNER IN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT, EITHER WAS NO LONGER POLITICALLY DANGEROUS OR AT LEAST WAS NOT NECESSARY TO EYADEMA.

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7. CHANGO'S CASE MAY BE SIMILAR. ONE ASPECT OF MATTER ON WHICH THERE IS BROAD AGREEMENT IS THAT EYADEMA HAS BEEN USING CHANGO (EVEN THOUGH HE DOESN'T TRUST HIM ENTIRELY) TO DIVIDE HIS TRADITIONAL ENEMIES, THE KOUMEANS. IT IS WELL-KNOWN

THAT PRESIDENT BACKED CHANGO LAST FEBRUARY IN STRUGGLE OVER CHIEFTANCY OF CANTON OF KOUMEA, IN WHICH CHANGO UNSUCCESSFULLY PRESENTED A CANDIDATE IN RACE AGAINST DANIEL BODJONA, WHOSE FAMILY HAD TRADITIONALLY HELD THIS POSITION. AFTER LOSING CONTEST, CHANGO PROSECUTED DANIEL'S BROTHER ANTOINE, THEN SECRETARY GENERAL OF MINISTRY OF FONCTION PUBLIQUE, FOR CALUMNY, SUCCEEDING IN HAVING HIM CONVICTED AND JAILED. FACT HE COULD NOT HAVE DONE THIS WITHOUT PRESIDENT'S ACQUIESENCE HAS LED TO SPECULATION THAT EYADEMA WAS DELIBERATELY DIGGING HOLE FOR CHANGO TO FALL INTO. ACCORDING TO THIS THEORY, PRESIDENT FIRST USED CHANGO TO DIVIDE DOUMEANS, THEN LET HIM HANG HIMSELF BY HIS TRUMPED UP IMPRISONMENT OF BODJONA. (LATTER IS NOW OUT OF JAIL AND APPARENTLY ON ROAD TO REHABILITATION.) I HAVE ALSO HEARD RELIABLE REPORT THAT CHANGO HAD BECOME SO INVOLVED IN EXTORTION KICKBACKS FROM PERSONS INVOLVED IN LEGAL PROCEEDINGS HERE THAT HIS VENALITY COULD

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NO LONGER BE IGNORED.

8. THE REMOVAL OF CHANGO, WHO ALONG WITH ASSILA WAS ONE OF EYADEMA'S CO-CONSPIRATORS IN 1963 COUP, WHICH RESULTED IN DEATH OF OLYMPIO AND OVERTHROW OF HIS GOVERNMENT, LEAVES ONLY EYADEMA, OF THAT ENTIRE GROUP, STILL IN GOVERNMENT. ONLY OTHER MILITARY FIGURE STILL IN GOVERNMENT IS ALIDOU (A CABRAI FROM TOWN OF LAMA KARA), WHO DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN 1963 COUP, PROBABLY ONLY BECAUSE HE WAS STATIONED IN SOKODE AT TIME, BUT WHO DID IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARDS BECOME, ALONG WITH EYADEMA, ASSILA, AND CHANGO, A MEMBER OF NINE-MAN REVOLUTIONARY JUNTA, HEADED BY BODJOLLE, WHICH RULED BRIEFLY UNTIL ESTABLISHMENT OF GRUNITSKY REGIME.

9. RAISING OF EKLO AND DOGO TO FULL MINISTERIAL RANK APPEARS INTENDED TO SHOW PRESIDENT'S CONFIDENCE IN THEM, ALTHOUGH IT COULD BE WINDOWDRESSING WITH PURPOSE OF MAKING REMOVAL OF CHANGO STAND OUT LESS STARKLY. SINCE BOTH ALREADY HELD PRESENT POSITIONS WITH RANK OF SECRETARIES OF STATE, THERE IS NO REAL CHANGE IN THEIR CASES, ALTHOUGH WE CAN HARDLY VIEW WITH PLEASURE ANY ELEVATION OF EKLO, WHO IS ONLY MEMBER OF GOVERNMENT WHO IS CLEARLY HOSTILE TO US.

DICKINSON

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